2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
FR5 Ngoni FR5

643 614 565 184 was thus different in the two kingdoms. In the north he was one ruler, though a supreme one, among several ruling kinsmen of the same clan. His position in the past had been strengthened by the prestige shared by his clansmen, but also challenged by his near kinsmen in positions of authority. In the central kingdom the Paramount shared no authority with his fellow clansmen. He was unique among them as a ruler, while sharing special ritual relationships with the two other clans which supported his position without challenging it.

643 614 585 A new Paramount, in order to be installed in his father's place, had to be of the big house as well as of the royal clan. Dr. Kuper described the Swazi practice whereby cattle were contributed by the nation for the mother of the king, so that she was called the 'mother of the people of the country'. She also described the ritual marriage of the first wife of a ruler, who was called *sisulamsiti*, and who was never the mother of the heir.[1] The Ngoni Paramount-elect in the northern kingdom married his first wife when he was a young man and she was called *msulamsizi*, 'the one who takes the darkness off him'. The big wife, who would bear the heir, was married with a large gift of cattle taken from the herd of the big wife of the reigning Paramount and, after marriage, was attached to her big house. We shall discuss in greater detail in the next chapter the relationships of the royal women to the Paramount and to each other. Here it is important to note that the big house owned by the big wife was the place where the future chief was brought up. In the central kingdom the first marriage of the Paramount was traditionally with a woman of the Magagula clan who was said not to bear children. She held an honoured place in the social hierarchy and was married with cattle taken from the herd of the *gogo* house of the reigning Paramount. It was regarded as a ritual marriage, for if she did bear children they were not acknowledged. [842 847] Informants were uncertain whether methods to prevent conception were used, or whether abortion was practised, or whether children, if born, died young or were disposed of or placed out in other households. The last alternatives were unlikely, and one of the first two expedients was in line with the phrase always used of this wife: 'she did not bear children'. The wife who bore the heir was married next and was always of another leading clan, and the cattle for her came from the herd of the big house of the reigning Paramount.

643 614 The reasons were obvious why the remembered genealogies of the Ngoni Paramounts of the royal clans were short compared with the genealogies of some other African royal houses. The remote ancestors of Jere chiefs and Maseko chiefs, who were, as we have seen, not Paramounts before they left the south, were forgotten once the departure had taken place. Only a few names had been handed down and were repeated by the official praisers, whose task it was to call out the names of the direct ancestors of the Paramount before declaiming his *izibongo* or

[1] Kuper, H. *op. cit.* pp. 34 & 91.

'A NEW STRANGER HAS COME'

Father's family to child

Ngoni children were indeed the children of their fathers from the time of their birth onwards. They were born into a 'house', of which their father was a member. If their father divorced his wife or she ran away, the children remained in the custody of his family. We have seen how the paternal grandmother took charge of all the preparations for birth, and of the actual birth itself. It was her proud duty to present the child to the public after the 'coming out of the hut' ceremony, when she took it to the kraal gate where the assembled elders were sitting. The other senior women of Ngoni families held her responsible for advising on the spacing between the birth of this new baby and the next, so that the interests of this child should be safeguarded. If it was suspected that the young wife was pregnant again before the grandmother had planned to wean the child, the other senior women said to her: 'Look now. You are foolish. The child has been endangered. You are like an enemy to him.' That touched her on a very vital point, and she in turn accused the young parents of harming the present child. Having rebuked them, generally in public, she followed it up with a box on the ear for her son and his wife. When this next child was born it was called 'the destroyer', because by following on too quickly, it had injured the propects of the first child.

Baby to nurse girl and women helpers

The baby, as we have seen, spent a great deal of its time in the company of its nurse girl, and after weaning she was its constant companion. She and the older woman helpers who supervised her formed a counterbalancing influence to the paternal grandmother, though outwardly they obeyed her instructions about the care of the child. The nurse girl especially was inclined to be indulgent; she was young and playful; the baby was her only responsibility. She was

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5
Maravi FR4
Cewa

The significance of Ngoni puberty ritual

We now come back to the question of why the Ngoni held to this private ritual for girls and boys at puberty. There were three main reasons. The first was that each Ngoni child belonged to his or her father's house. At this sign of physical maturity, significant for the boy or girl, and for the society, the elders of the house asserted anew their authority over them, performed a brief traditional ritual, and watched during the ritual for evidence of the Ngoni personality traits of courage and physical endurance which they expected to see in young adults. The second reason was that the change at puberty was regarded as marking only one of the stages in the development of growing boys and girls. It is true it had more significance for girls, in that it set the mature girls apart as a separate group. But it was not the prelude to immediate marriage, as the girls' initiation school was among the neighbouring Cewa people; nor was it in old days the prelude for the boys joining the army. The third reason was that the Ngoni did not regard fertility as the major dominant factor in the development of young women, as it undoubtedly was considered among the Cewa. They greatly disliked the ritual and the significance of the Cewa female initiation rites and forbade Ngoni women to have any part in them. Potency among men, on the other hand, was recognized as important both for the individual and for the social group, and impotence, particularly in leading men, was kept secret and hidden from outside knowledge as far as possible. If an Ngoni woman after marriage did not bear children, it was not considered a stigma on her, either individually or socially. The common practice of marrying one of her sisters as a 'substitute', or the very common practice of adoption was resorted to. The latter was always referred to as 'putting a child into the house of So and so'.

One of the alleged objects of initiation schools among other ethnic groups was to instruct the young initiates in correct

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

PERSONALITY AND CHARACTER

When the Ngoni talked about the separate ideal personalities of men and women, they emphasized the training needed for younger men, and to some extent also for younger women. Senior men and women were expected to possess special qualities due to their age and status and experience. It was recognised that the limited responsibilities of young men before marriage gave them little authority in village and family affairs. Since each family however was bringing up its girls to leave them on marriage and to take the good name of the family elsewhere, there was less distinction made between the qualities desired in younger married women and older ones than there was between the two groups of men.

The ideal personality of Ngoni women

This had four main aspects: physical capacity and appearance, relationship to her husband and his relatives, competence in household management, and general reputation for justice and wisdom.

We talked in Chapter III about the connexion in Ngoni thinking between women being healthy and strong and being able to bear healthy children. In the marriage negotiations and even at the final ceremony itself in the bridegroom's village, there were formalized standard questions put by the bridegroom's representatives about the health of the girl and her family, and these were replied to also in conventional phrases. Such inquiries about health had been made secretly long before the final ceremony, and indeed before any formal approaches had been made which led to the betrothal. But the fact that they were made in public on two distinct occasions, at the preliminary visit of the man's representatives and at the marriage itself, underlined the importance of health and its relation to child-bearing capacity in the ideal Ngoni woman.

We saw in the last chapter that physical strength for continuous hard manual work in the household and in the

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

contributed by the whole nation, were not found among the Ngoni.

Informants are agreed that in the old days young men and women married whom they were told and never attempted to make their own choice against their parents' will. From evidence available this seems to be an oversimplification. It seems likely that individual choice mattered less in those days than it does now, but it cannot have been entirely inoperative. It is said that each regiment of men used to flirt with its corresponding women's regiment, and that marriages sometimes followed. Wiese says that among the aristocratic families a woman had the right to choose her own husband, but that this right was dying out and it was becoming the practice to marry off daughters so as to secure the most marriage cattle and maintain upper-class endogamy.[3] It is true that on the evidence of genealogies there do not seem to have been many marriages between very aristocratic women and the most recently captured men, and that therefore we are justified in assuming a tendency towards upper-class endogamy, but this tendency seems not to have been very strong and indeed there never was a clear-cut upper class but instead a method of ranking families in terms of ethnic origin. My informants never suggested that a man would marry his daughter so as to bring in as many cattle as possible, and it seems unlikely that this was ever a common motive.[4]

A girl was expected to be chaste before she was married. From the procedure adopted by the Zulu and from information from other Ngoni groups, it seems likely that girls were examined at marriage to check that they had not been deflowered. Rattray records this among the Ngoni of Southern Nyasaland,[5] and Read makes a similar statement.[6] My own informants had such faith in the sexual rectitude of the past as contrasted with the promiscuity of the present that it was difficult to establish what they really thought happened. It seems that unmarried people were allowed intercourse *inter crura* and that this was considered not a violation of chastity. The whole question has been obscured by the conflict of values between the South-Eastern Bantu leaders, whose view appeared to have prevailed at the time, and the recent captives from the Cewa and kindred peoples, who believed that a girl would die if she did not copulate at puberty. We shall see the outcome of this conflict when we come to discuss modern marriage.

As might be anticipated in a system in which marriage is a transfer of fertility, a wife was expected to be fertile. If she was barren special procedures were adopted to validate the substance of the marriage. A man could appeal to his wife's relatives for another

[3] Wiese, op. cit. 'Expedição . . .', p. 473 and 'Geschichte . . .', p. 191.
[4] See below, p. 120.
[5] Rattray, *Some folk-lore stories and songs in Chinyanja, with English translation and notes*, S.P.C.K., 1907, p. 115.
[6] Margaret Read, 'The Moral code of the Ngoni and their former military state', *Africa*, xi (1938), p. 6.

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

842 595 woman, who was sometimes a younger sister or a junior father's daughter. This woman then became a linked co-wife (*nshanzi*)[1] subordinate to her barren sister. If the linked wife was also barren then the man could demand another one. The barren woman was never sent back to her own relatives but continued to live with her husband. Children of the linked wife were allocated to her and she 587 became responsible for their upbringing. Similarly if a wife died before she had borne a child a linked co-wife replaced her.

842 837 If the man was sterile he used to arrange for a friend to sleep secretly with his wife so that she should conceive. The friend was rewarded with a beast after a child had been born but the reason for making the reward was kept secret. If a seedraiser was caught he was killed for committing adultery, despite the fact of his having been called in by the husband.[2]

839 684 As well as being fertile, wives were expected to be chaste. On this point the evidence is clear. Wiese states that adulterers were always killed;[3] all subsequent writers have agreed with him. I was told that if the woman's husband was not an important person he was sometimes placated with a present of cattle. If the husband persisted in referring the matter to the chief the senior lieutenants of the chief might intercede on his behalf, if this was the man's first offence. Otherwise the man and the woman were both killed by one of the senior lieutenants.

567 831 The approved mode of behaviour for women was chastity before marriage, submission in the choice of husband, and fertility and fidelity in marriage. These obligations were clear-cut and definite and of universal applicability. The obligations of affines towards 602 one another were not so straightforward, and their fulfilment was a process marked by ritual transfers of cattle and carefully prescribed modes of behaviour. In particular the relationship of a man to his 606 wife's mother was altered progressively from one of strict avoidance to openly expressed friendliness. The stages in the process represented the gradual acceptance of the man into the family of his wife's parents as a son-in-law, the father of their daughter's children.

586 584 Marriage was entered into without compulsion on either side, but the right to terminate it was held in the man's group alone. A woman could not on any ground secure a divorce. All my informants agreed on this point. A man could divorce his wife at any time by sending her back to her own kinsfolk, giving her a small present as an indication that he had divorced her. If he had offered bridewealth for her, her kinsfolk were under an obligation to provide him with a

[1] Read, in her 'Moral code', p. 18 translates this word (*nklanzi*) as 'substitute'. Lancaster, 'Tentative chronology', p. 79, gives the word as *nsklanze*. Kuper, *An African Aristocracy*, p. 39 translates the Swazi word *inklanti* as 'subordinate co-wife'. I have chosen the translation 'linked co-wife' as there are other kinds of subordinate co-wife who are not *nshanzi*, and some *nshanzi* are not substitutes.

[2] See below, p. 34.

[3] Wiese, op. cit. 'Expedicao . . .', p. 471, and 'Geschichte . . .', pp. 189-90.

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
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much opportunity for a man to assess his sweetheart's domestic efficiency and moral character, but he can get information on these matters from other people who live in her vicinity. When he sees a girl in a distant village where he is staying, he has more leisure to see what she is like and can ask his own hosts about her character. Girls visit in the same way as men, and if a girl is anxious to get a husband and fears she may not find one, she may spend most of her time visiting in different villages hoping to attract a suitable man. There is more time for visiting and flirting at the end of the dry season when there is little work to do in the gardens, but marriages are contracted throughout the year.[5]

Young men say that what they like in a girl is a light skin colour, a pretty face, and the ability to dance and to copulate well. Some men, however, say that such a girl might be all right to run after, but for marriage one would also need to know that she could cook porridge. Women say they like a man who is well dressed, who has a good job working for a European, and who has a parting in his hair. Women sometimes wear medicines which are believed to attract men, and men who have no good clothes may borrow the clothes of others in order to attract women.

3. Sexual partners

The relationship between a man and his wife, at least for the first years of their marriage, is spoken of principally in sexual terms, and the sexual activities of the couple are more closely defined by the marriage bond than are their residence and their economic life. Informants say that the reason for the existence of marriage is either 'the work in the house', a euphemism for copulation, or else 'clothes', that is, so that a woman may have someone to buy clothes for her. It is, however, much easier to improvise alternative solutions to the problem of clothing than it is to find alternative means of sexual satisfaction without coming into conflict with law and morality. Furthermore, while we have seen in the old days that the main emphasis was on the fertility of the woman, this has now shifted, and it is her skill in copulation rather than her success in childbearing that is emphasized. Fertility is still valued, but does not appear to form so important a theme in ceremonial, songs, and gossip as among other societies where the principle of unilinear descent has not broken down, and where, therefore, fertility either of a man's wife or of his sister, is a vital necessity for the maintenance of local structure.

The husband-wife relationship is one in which the man is apparently superordinate to his wife, but we shall see that in practice this superordination is not as clear-cut as might at first appear. It is furthermore a relationship in which there are certain prescribed mutual obligations, so that if these obligations are neglected, it is

[5] Cf. Young and Banda, *Our African Way of Life*, p. 69.

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
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837 578 believes that her husband is committing adultery with another woman she endeavours to find out who the woman is. She usually refuses to speak to her when they meet, and if they are forced to come into contact, as at a beer party, there is likely to be a fight between them. A parturient woman may ask her midwife to pretend that there are difficulties in labour so that her husband can be called upon to confess his adultery and name his mistress.

864 The sexual aspect of marriage influences the training and experiences of children. The explanation given for moving children from their parents' hut to a dormitory at the age of six or seven is that by then children are 'wise enough' and will talk to their playmates about their parents' sexual activities in the hut. Girls aged [897] five years or so start to imitate the dances of their elders and to join in the dance competitions when girls come from other villages. [533] Many of the songs sung at these dances are concerned with various aspects of sexual relations. At age ten, or sometimes earlier they [535] also begin to practice the most important of the women's erotic dances, *cimwangalala*,[11] which is performed only indoors. At a 881 girl's first menstruation she is secluded for from a few days up to a 864 month, and is tested by women who have borne children to see that she can dance *cimwangalala* and other erotic dances effectively, that she knows the formalities of copulation, and how to behave when she menstruates. Even where the girl is secluded for the full month, and her training is accompanied by a great deal of symbolism and ceremonial, there is little reference to her potential fertility.

864 There is no formal instruction in sexual matters for boys, and there are no erotic dances for them. They learn their sexlore from their older companions in the bush or in the dormitory. The only [831] specific aspect of sexual maturation that appears to receive emphasis is the growth of large testicles, and boys brew themselves medicines to expedite this.

842 832 Both fertility and sexual satisfaction can be facilitated by the use of medicines. There is a well-known medicine for the cure of barrenness, and there are many kinds of aphrodisiacs.[12] A girl [864] learns the use of aphrodisiacs from other women in the village, and she is formally taught sexual behaviour by her puberty instructress.[13] 881 The old woman who is in charge of her puberty seclusion, who is 593 sometimes the girl's grandmother, supervises the sexual behaviour of the girl for the first few years of her married life. If, as a bride, she succeeds in forcing her husband to give her a present before she will lie with him, the present must be handed over to the puberty instructress the next morning. Later she may demonstrate her [535] erotic proficiency by dancing[14] in the hut before her husband and her instructress.

[11] Meaning, in Nsenga, 'the thing of you just sleeping' (i.e. copulating).
[12] Such as *mlololo*, a root, and *kajelejela*, a plant.
[13] *Mphungu*.
[14] The dance is called *cikapa*. Cf. Nyanja *kapakapa*, swinging backwards and forwards.

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni
Maravi FR4

Girls are not examined to see if they have been deflowered. Many girls have love affairs with young boys before they reach puberty, and at one time children built play-houses, after the manner of the Cewa, where they pretended to be adults playing at cooking and copulation. The Cewa encouraged this among their own children and at puberty Cewa girls, if not already deflowered, had their hymen forcibly ruptured in a prescribed manner. We have seen that the Ngoni formerly expected girls to be chaste before marriage while the Cewa believed that if a girl did not copulate at puberty she would die. It seems nowadays that adults expect that pre-pubescent boys and girls will play together sexually and that, provided this takes place with a certain amount of discretion, nothing is done to stop it. Boys and girls visit each other in dormitories, hoping that their voices will not be recognized by people in neighbouring huts. After puberty young men and women continue to flirt together, individuals varying in the extent to which they copulate. Grown men do not usually sleep with young girls, nor grown women with young boys, and if this does happen and is discovered there is always the suspicion of sorcery. The Ngoni believe, with most of their neighbours, that in order to make many of the anti-social medicines of sorcery effective, a sorcerer must copulate with some partner morally forbidden to him (or her), such as a close relative or a person of greatly disparate age or an animal. With this background of belief, Ngoni say that after puberty young men and women naturally like to frolic together and not with their juniors. Within this framework of tolerated covert activity no particular arrangements are made at puberty, save that if a man is betrothed to a young girl he will be invited formally to come and sleep with her once while she is secluded.

Thus from an early age their future roles as husbands and wives condition the sexual activities of boys and girls. A girl who allows herself to be seduced too easily is regarded as foolish and a man who is for ever chasing unmarried girls when he should be founding a *family is regarded as immature. But sexual activity is taken for* granted, and the only stipulations are that it should be conducted discreetly so that the older people in the village are not forced to notice it, and that unmarried girls should not bear live children. Knowledge of abortifacients seems to be fairly common and recently contraceptives, issued originally to soldiers in the 1939-45 war, have come into use. Few cases of seduction of unmarried girls come before the courts.

Despite the emphasis on sexual satisfaction rather than on fertility, Ngoni men and women still desire children. This is so for men despite the low incidence of bridewealth payments and the uncertainty about the custody of children. A man's children may decide to live with their mother's people, but they are still his children and he can always follow them from village to village in his old age wherever they decide to settle.

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
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842 wherever they decide to settle. Children are still valuable. A barren woman is pitied, and a man's impotence is whispered about behind his back. Men and women seek fertility, and a man tries to conceal his impotence. A woman who does not want to bear children is regarded as irresponsible.

We have seen that the traditional solution for barrenness was to introduce a linked co-wife, but this is now rarely done. A woman can either look for medicines[15] to make her fertile, or, if she is unsuccessful, she may beg children from a fertile sister. These children will stay with her while they are young, but they are not thought of or talked about as being her own children.

No clear distinction is drawn between impotence and sterility, and men who are said to be impotent are also known to commit adultery. A sterile husband does not find favour with his wife or with her relatives, who want her to have children to care for her when she grows old. If medicines fail to cure a man's sterility, and it is thought that the lack of children is due to him and not to his wife, then he may call in an acquaintance to sleep with his wife so that [837] she may conceive. For this task, it is said that a man will choose a person whose discretion he can trust, but one on the fringe of his acquaintance who will not feel disposed to gossip maliciously about the incident afterwards. Thus it is said that a man would never ask his brother to do this. If the woman bears a child then at some [431] later date the husband gives a goat to the progenitor, hoping that people will not connect the present with the birth of the child.

Sterility is a shameful thing and men do not easily admit to it. [128] My information on the procedure followed in specific instances is based only on village gossip and not on admissions by the men and women concerned. Although it is agreed that a sterile man may feel 842 forced to call in a seed-raiser the whole matter must remain secret. 837 There must be no loophole by which adultery might be condoned. In the words of an informant,

> A man may be impotent and may ask someone to copulate with his wife so that she may have children. This man coming to copulate with his wife comes in secret as it is considered a disgraceful thing among the people of the family and the rest of the village if they know, yet the people in the village know very well sometimes. In the old days the same thing happened, but if a man coming to sleep with the woman came in an open way, and everyone knew of his sleeping with the wife of an impotent man, he was to be killed by the chief, even though the impotent man asked him to do this work for him. The person coming to do this work of copulating with this woman was to be paid a cow or a goat for the work that he did. In these days it happens.

The sterile husband takes the risk that his friend will continue sleeping with the woman after she has conceived. I have recorded

[15] Called *cisawa*. The first child born after the successful administration of this medicine is sometimes called Cisawa.

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
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one instance where the woman ran off with the man called in by her sterile husband.

4. The legal relationship

Emphasis on sexual partnership is characteristic of the beginning of marriage. Young people are 'foolish', dance all night long and sleep late in the morning. With the arrival of children, man and wife emerge from the tutelage of their elders and non-sexual aspects of their marriage relationship gain in importance. Even then the importance of sexual satisfaction is not forgotten. People say openly of a woman who obstructs her husband when he seeks a second wife, 'She is too fond of his penis', and old widows explain their failure to remarry by saying 'Our joints are too stiff to copulate'.

Nevertheless at all times there is a great deal more in Ngoni marriage than mere sexual partnership. The obligations and duties of husband and wife towards each other and each other's kin are determined by the marriage payments and ratified by the ceremonies of marriage. These obligations persist despite the fluctuations of sexual attraction. We have seen that in 'the time of peace' the two principal transfers were 'snuff-box' and bridewealth. Today the position is different and the rights transferred by the marriage payments are different. For simplicity we may discuss the latter payment first. Bridewealth is still recognized but, as can be seen from Table V, is paid in only about four per cent of all marriages. It consists of a payment of one or more beasts or £6 made by the man to his wife's father.[16] If only one cow is offered and it dies before calving, it must be replaced. Some indication of the range of variation in amounts paid is given by Table VI.

This sample of only twelve payments is very small, but there is some indication that the amount paid has decreased in recent years. This is of interest in view of the general rise in the standard of wealth and in the amount offered as legalization payment.

By the payment of bridewealth a man ensures that all the children of his wife, by whatever genitor, shall, or rather ought to, belong to his group of relatives and live in his village when they grow up. The payment is made only after several children have been born. In the old days, if this payment was made, the children were legitimate and lived in their father's segment, and if it was not paid they could be claimed by their mother's father's segment. In these days there is no such hard and fast rule. Everyone has in effect a large choice of places where he can live, and the payment or non-payment of bridewealth for his mother is only one factor operating with many others in influencing his decisions. It is not surprising that so few people pay bridewealth.

[16] For comparative figures for the Ngoni of Southern Nyasaland, see Read, 'Native standards of living and African cultural change', *Africa* xi (1938), 3, supplement, p. 33.

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
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two groups of relatives. In the partial destruction of the father-in-law's crop by the man's friends, the latent hostility between the two groups is canalized into a form that is just socially acceptable. In the later stages of hoeing the men and women in the party act wildly, dance round and round anyone who tries to interfere with them and throw earth all over them. At first all contact between the father-in-law and the leader of the party is through intermediaries, and if all goes well, and there is no crisis, the father-in-law will always remain in the background. But with rising tempers the tension increases, and the father-in-law may himself go to cajole and threaten the party. When they do decide to stop and go into the village, an attempt is made to establish peaceful relations again, and the leader of the party begins to protest that they never really intended holding out for such a large present, that they knew it was getting dark and that they could not hoe at night. They settle down to drink the beer provided by the father-in-law and in the morning go back to their own village. It is significant that the man himself cannot be the leader of the party, so that he does not come into direct contact with his father-in-law. He shelters behind the party leader, so that the chances of an open breach between him and his father-in-law are lessened.

The formalized expression of hostility, which is a feature of many Ngoni ceremonials,[12] appears most clearly in marriage in the custom of the hoeing party, but is present in some other situations, as in the instruction of the bride at the gall bladder ceremony, when she is sometimes told she has a bad character, is mean and deceitful. Even the carrying of beer can be used to express hostility, as is indicated by Reuben's remark towards the end of his son-in-law's hoeing party, that he would tell his wife to brew beer and send it to his son-in-law's village, where the women bringing beer would demand a present even greater than the one demanded by the leader of the hoers.[13]

Men and women wish their daughters to bear children, and are reluctant to marry them to impotent men. Yet childbirth is hazardous, and a woman may die in labour because of her adultery or the adultery of her husband. It is important, therefore, that a woman's parents should be informed whenever she becomes pregnant, lest the woman die and her parents hear of her death without being forewarned of the danger. It is not sufficient that the woman's parents should hear from others that their daughter is pregnant. She must go to them on a special visit to tell them the news herself. This formal notification takes place every time she is pregnant, but if, when she becomes pregnant for the first time, she is living in

[12] For another example, see the installation of the headman's deputy described in Gluckman, Mitchell and Barnes, 'The village headman in British Central Africa', *Africa*, xix (1949), pp. 100-106.

[13] See Appendix III, p. 131.

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

People regret that
a faithful woman whose husband stays away many years does not bear children, but they do not condone infidelity. The prolonged absence of men which leads to this unsatisfactory situation is seen as part of the disruption of the old order by the coming of the Whites. It is they who are responsible, both for the lack of children in marriages where the woman is faithful and for the occurrence of adultery in marriages where she is not. The virtue of bearing children and the virtue of fidelity are values in conflict and the Ngoni see only one solution, the ending of labour migration. This conflict appears with particular force when a man goes away leaving his wife pregnant. This action is in itself hazardous, for the man will not be there at the time of birth to confess his adultery, yet men do go away knowing their wives are pregnant. If a live child is born, it must be protected by the rite of 'taking up the child'.[19] If this is neglected the child may die, and it is in the interests therefore of the man's relatives as well as the woman's that it should be performed. The only consistent line of action is to ensure that the medicines which can be used as a substitute for the rite are available to the woman. These medicines are expensive, and relatives may be reluctant to find the money for them, particularly as the whole procedure is under the ban of the missions. The only other solution is for the woman to take a lover with whom she performs the rite. If they are caught, the excuse that they were sleeping together merely for 'taking up the child' is not accepted. Here the same conflict and the same attitude are seen as when a woman has an impotent husband.[20] To achieve a desirable end the woman must commit adultery; but woe betide her if she is caught in the act.

There is an important difference between the way in which the kinsfolk act at the level of village discussion and their behaviour later when matters are referred to the court. In the village they are fairly free to act without reference to the absent husband. They can give advice and can attempt to enforce mutually agreed damage payments of chicken, acting in the light of their opinion of what is in their own interest and in the general interest of their kinsman. They cannot deal in this way with divorce or with large damages for adultery. These matters must be referred to the court and here much more deliberate attention is paid to the wishes of the absent man. If a case of adultery is brought by the man's kin, the court enquires about the wishes of the husband in the matter. The husband's kin must produce a letter from him authorizing them to proceed against his wife and he must say in the letter whether he wishes to divorce her or merely to claim damages for adultery. The case is usually adjourned for three to six months while this is done. A woman who pleads for divorce on the ground of her husband's desertion is similarly told to write to him informing him

[19] See above, pp. 45f.
[20] See above, p. 34.

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
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developed as the men's. It is to be expected, therefore, that there would be greater Cewa and Nsenga influence in those affairs controlled by women than in political and military matters, which were organized by men. This is borne out by linguistic evidence, for while many of the words, but not all, pertaining to affairs of state are of Ngoni origin, the words now used in the seclusion of girls are drawn from Cewa and Nsenga.

We find therefore that it is the bearing of children before marriage and to a lesser extent pre-marital impregnation which are disapproved of rather than pre-marital copulation. The real contrast in attitude is between pre-marital copulation and adultery. We have seen that in the old days adulterers were killed by order of the chief. The punishment of adultery was a process involving headmen, lieutenants and other important men. The abhorrence of adultery remains despite its great frequency and the prohibition on killing adulterers. An adulterer is a thief, stealing the rights of another man and endangering his marriage. Even when the wife of a labour migrant bears a child and it is in danger of *mdulo* until it can be 'taken up' (p. 87) she cannot openly call in a man with whom to perform this rite. She must either get a man to come in secret or obtain expensive medicines which remove the danger. In like manner, if her husband is impotent, there must be no public recognition of any extra-marital intercourse, for impotence is shameful and not to be admitted and cannot justify the intervention of another man. It is thought regrettable that a woman should grow old without bearing daughters to help her pound maize and sons to clothe her in her old age. Yet when medicines have been of no avail and her husband calls in a seed-raiser he must come in secret and later be rewarded covertly. Similarly the sexual activities of children must be conducted discreetly. Here, however, a much more tolerant attitude is taken and there is not the same need for secrecy. There is no chaperoning of unmarried girls but only of married women whose husbands are away. There is no inspection of girls at marriage, and one informant said that if after puberty a girl has no lover with whom she can sleep, her grandmother will call in a young man to copulate with the girl in the grandmother's house to see if she is proficient, and that for this he would be rewarded by the grandmother. From one point of view we may say that there is pre-marital freedom, with discretion, and marital restriction of sexual activity. Pre-marital intercourse does, however, have a moral connotation, and it is held that the girl who sleeps too easily with all comers before marriage will continue thus after she is married. The need for discretion in premarital affairs is in some part due to the activities of the missions, working at the village level through deacons, elders and women helpers. Yet in general no action is taken by the local Christian group in the village unless the pre-marital sexual activities of its members are conducted in such a way that it is no longer possible to ignore them.

Sexual intercourse is the critical activity of marriage. Within

7: Hodgson G-5 (1926) 1933 FR5 Ngoni

842 otherwise *mfulo* of the child will still result. Medicine is taken also by women who are unable to conceive. If it fails, it is because a spirit has entered the womb; and lots are taken to find whose spirit it is, after which sacrifices are offered until the desired result is obtained.

8. *Dissolution of Marriage* (Chewa).

586 The Achewa have no form of legal separation by agreement, and a divorce can be effected only where adequate reason exists. A husband may not divorce his wife on account of barrenness; but he may divorce her for adultery or desertion; or if she persistently neglects to cook food, bring water or perform her other work; or if she is offensively and perpetually jealous. A wife may divorce her husband if he is impotent; or if he fails to maintain a habitable house, or to do his share of the work; or if he fails to pay her tax, feed and clothe her properly; or on account of desertion or ill-treatment. Effect is given to the divorce after the hearing of the case by the husband handing over a fowl or other token, always known as *mubvi*[1] (an arrow), in the presence of the *anklouse*[17] to the wife's father, who passes it on to her *mtsibweni*.[4] The wife always keeps the children, even if she has been at fault; though sometimes in very flagrant cases one or more fully-grown children may be awarded to the husband; and in adultery the co-respondent is obliged to pay heavy damages as compensation for the loss of the children, [684] and the value of several years' tax is refunded by the *mtsibweni*. A woman may not be divorced while she is pregnant.

9. *Marriage of Widows* (Chewa).

587 A widow may not be courted until after the conclusion of the funeral ceremonies described in Section VII. When, a few months later, she has to make her choice, she brews beer at her own house, and on the evening of the *tsiku lokambula* her suitors, friends and relations foregather outside; the eldest female relation holds before her pieces of *tsekwa*[2] grass, and tells her which of the suitors each piece represents. Then she signifies her choice by taking the appropriate piece in her hand; and the old woman proceeds to the house of the chosen one, selects therefrom a knife or other small article, and hands it to the widow. In due course the bridegroom, accompanied by his friends, brings a cow, sheep, goat or fowl, according to his [775] means, and ties it to the centre post of the widow's house, in order to get rid of the spirit [842] of her late husband; otherwise, he will not be able to beget a child. The widow brings out beer; her relations subsequently remove the animal from the centre post, and at night the bridal pair sleep apart in the house. Next day they procure medicine from a doctor and put it in a big pot in the house; and in the evening first the man and then the woman bathes in it. That night they again abstain from conjugal intercourse; but at cockcrow, after bathing a second time in the pot, they take it outside the village to a place where two paths meet, and break it there, thus finally and completely ridding themselves of the spirit of the first husband. They return to the village before it is light, and then commence their married life.

[1] Cf. H. S. Stannus, *Journ. Roy. Anthrop. Inst.*, 1910, vol. xl, p. 309.
[2] *Tsekwa*, a long coarse grass used for thatching.

11:Lancaster G-5 (ca. 1935) 1937 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Maravi FR4

migration about 1833; her burial place is unknown. She died without issue. She was the eldest daughter of Nombhenguls, who was a brother of Ziwide and Sigode, and a son of Langa Vimba Nqumayo. She was a cousin to Manukusa, son of Sigode, and to Nompetu, daughter of Ziwide, who married Matshobana, the father of Mziliknzi. Sometimes it happens that a great wife or other major wife is not blessed with children. In these cases another woman is placed in her "house" with the object of raising seed to it. The children resulting are looked upon as children of the establishment in which their mother was "placed" and are in the same position as if born to the major wife; the eldest son of a chief's "Great Wife" inherits the chieftainship of the tribe on the death of his father. This was, and is, the custom of the Ngoni; it is also known to the Achewa and Ansenga Tribes. This custom is known to the Ngoni as *Nshlanze*.

Zongendaba therefore took as *Nshlanze* Sosera Nqumayo, a younger sister of Loziwawa, and by her he had issue as follows:—Ntutu Mpezeni, the eldest son, "the Inkosana of the Indhlunkulu," Jalose, Mtwalalichi, and Ndhlobvu Makekevu. Sosera was born about 1808 near St. Lucia Bay. She migrated with the chief and followed him through all his wanderings until his death, after which she accompanied her son and heir, Ntutu Mpezeni, into what is now the Fort Jameson district. There she settled in her village called "Dingeni," where she died in 1900 and was buried near the site of the old village of Mtenguleni Uka Sosera close to the Kakolo stream; her grave is now marked by an euphorbia tree. The site is on the farm owned by Major Jefferies, O.B.E., which prior to the invasion of the Ngoni used to be the land of the Achewa chief, Kampara.

Sosera is well remembered by many natives who are living to-day, and although she died at a great age it is said that she was in possession of her full faculties until the last. She is described as being a real chieftainess and it is said that in later years if annoyed by the younger generation she would lay about her with her *mchiza* (staff) in a lusty manner. Many amusing tales are told of her astuteness and dry humour.

After Zongendaba's death, Sosera chose for a very beautiful woman, named Nthonane, who was a young sister wife to the house and who had borne no children, one, Sawasa Mazunko, as a seed raiser, for which he received twenty head of cattle. A daughter was born and named Ndawiri Jere; she now resides in the Fort Manning District of Nyasaland and from her this information was obtained. Ndawiri looked upon Ntutu Mpezeni as her brother, and Ndawiri was, and is, looked upon as one of Zongendaba's children. She married Ndawombi, since dead, and has one son, Ndawombi Hara.

It is agreed by the old indunas that Ntutu Mpezeni would have been about nine years of age when he crossed over the Zambesi, that he was carried across as befitted a Paramount Chief's heir, that, prior to the crossing, Zongendaba had given him a little shield and an assegai, and that he had killed his first duiker buck before the crossing. This is also borne out by the sons of Zimakazi Lavu Ngoma and Ngandu Mbawa, both of whose fathers were set the task of being servants to the chief's heir in his youth.